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DE RUEHUNV #0358 2081221
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 271221Z JUL 09
FM USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9880
INFO RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1728
RUCNNAR/VIENNA NARCOTICS COLLECTIVE
RUCNCRI/VIENNA CRIME COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS UNVIE VIENNA 000358

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: Increasing Speculation on Future of UNODC Executive Director

REF: UNVIE VIENNA 00323

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Delegations in Vienna are starting to discuss more openly their position on a potential one year extension of Executive Director Costa's term, as well as the possibility of other candidates. In the past week Charge has been approached by Canada, Sweden, Australia and France, all inquiring into the U.S. position on Costa's desire for an extension. Canada expressed opposition to any extension, while Sweden, Australia and France all stated that they have not yet received instructions.

¶2. (SBU In a recent conversation Charge asked Swedish Ambassador Hans Lundborg if Stockholm would field a candidate to succeed Costa, as we had heard from others. Lundborg stated that Sweden has yet to make a decision on a possible Costa extension, but that in any event it was unlikely Sweden would advance a candidate given its dim view of UNODC these days. Although Sweden intends to increase its level of general purpose contribution to the UNODC for 2009, Lundborg stated that if things continue to proceed at the UNODC as they are under Costa, "I guarantee Swedish support will go to zero." Lundborg gave no indication that he was personally interested in the position. (Reftel)

¶3. (SBU) In a separate conversation with Charge, the French Charge noted attraction to the Geneva group position on term limits, but also expressed appreciation for Costa's leadership. The now departed French Ambassador had earlier informed us that major donors to the UNODC would be "crazy" not to support a Costa extension. Responding to the French Charge's query regarding U.S. views, Charge seconded France's appreciation for Costa's work, and noted that USG's position has nothing to do with Costa himself, but everything to do with adhering to a consistent policy on term limits across UN leadership.

¶4. (SBU) Given the ongoing uncertainty of Costa's future, and the possibility that multiple candidates could emerge, Mission expects the intrigue and politicking to intensify in the next few months but is likely that this speculation has gotten back to Costa. As Canada noted in explaining their own resistance to an extension, it is entirely possible that Costa will be able to wire this on his own through SYG Ban, presenting us with a fait accompli.

Pyatt